

Applicant: Lipponen et al.
Application No.: 10/559,598
Response to Office action dated Nov. 20, 2008
Response filed February 9, 2009

Remarks

Claims 71–79 remain pending in the application. In the Office action dated Nov. 20, 2008, claims 76–79 were rejected as obvious over Korhonen et al. (US 6,994,771) in view of Laapotti (US 6,103,066), and claims 76 and 79 were rejected as obvious over Hamalainen et al. (WO 02/072952) in view of Eljoki et al (US 5,756,156).

A phone interview was conducted on January 26, 2009 with Examiner Hug. The examiner's courtesy during the interview is acknowledged with appreciation. During the interview the applied references Korhonen et al. and Hamalainen were discussed and it was agreed that they do not show the combination of a vacuum level over 5 kPa in combination with spray application of size before or during the application where the vacuum is applied directly to the unsupported web. It was further agreed that the proposed new limitations found support in the specification. However the examiner indicated an RCE would be necessary to consider the new issues raised by the amended claims, and to conduct a further search of the art.

Further reviewing the reference Hamalainen FIGS. 3 and 4 where spray coating on an unsupported web is illustrated, it is observed that the spray coating 19 is followed by a vacuum box 20 which is on the same side of the web as the spray coater. The vacuum box in addition to being on the same side as the spray coater, is arranged to remove spray coating mist (p. 9, lines 14–16), not to apply a vacuum to the side opposite the side which is spray coated.

The claims have been further amended from those presented at the interview by the addition of the step of *creating an underpressure that sucks the size solution applied onto the first side of the web into pores in inner layers of the web* as described in paragraph [0009] of the specification and in original PCT claims 2 and 22.

In Korhonen et al. column 8 lines 15–25 suggest that the web could be unsupported between rolls without suggesting a vacuum could be applied without an underlying wire or fabric. In both references the web is backed by a fabric where the vacuum is applied, whereas the drawings show that the web of the present invention is unsupported by a fabric as it passes over the vacuum

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roll. With respect to claim 77 directed to FIG. 7, Korhonen et al. Column 8 lines 22–26 suggests an infrared dryer but also indicates that the web is backed by a felt or a belt.

Applicant believes that no new matter has been added by this amendment.

Applicant submits that the claims, as amended, are in condition for allowance. Favorable action thereon is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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